



Statement

By

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International Maritime Piracy and Security**

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Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr. President,

I have the honour to start my statement by thanking you most sincerely for your initiative in convening this Informal Ministerial Meeting on International Maritime Piracy.

Mr. President,

Following the collapse of Somalia's Central authority, the country succumbed to enormous problems. The country's natural resources have been mismanaged by warlords and corrupt businessmen. Marine resources have been depleted, and foreign vessels from industrialized nations have flushed their wastes into the country's territorial waters. As a result of this, Somalia's coral reefs are reportedly dead and the lobsters and tunas are gradually vanishing.

Mr. President,

It is an established fact now that the country is experiencing indiscriminately illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing activities by foreign sea poachers. These activities have already had a devastating impact on our fishermen. Their livelihood is jeopardized and their fishing infrastructures have been destroyed.

The consequential results of overfishing, the dumping of wastes in the Somali territorial waters, and subsequently the demonization of our fishermen, have generated a bitter resentment from the people. This resentment coupled with the collapse of the Somali central government has led to, among other things, piracy. Piracy is therefore a symptom of the problems related to overexploitation of Somalia's resources, the demonization of Somali fishermen and other coastal dwellers, the flushing of wastes in

our territorial waters by foreign vessels without being accountable for their actions, and the destruction of the Somali marine and coastal infrastructures.

Mr. President,

The Somali people's resentment has helped to invoke the pirates' legitimate grievances regarding foreign exploitation of marine resources and the degradation of the marine environment. The Somali pirates admit that their actions are counter to the Somali traditional values. Somalis, despite their 3333-km coast, were never known to have indulged in piracy prior to the collapse of the Somali national institutions. What has prompted piracy is the destruction that has taken place on land. And for the pirates to resort to illegal activities would for many be justifiable as long as the country and its people continued to succumb to poverty and unemployment. For the pirates, placing more value on the money and the mouths it can feed is more important than the Somali traditional values.

Mr. President,

It is sad that the number of attacks in the waters off the Horn of Africa continue to increase. Piracy is exacerbating security in the region. Its impact is also affecting global security and contributing to the world's economic slowdown. Each year thousands of vessels pass through the Gulf of Aden, a vital shipping route for international trade. The risk raised by piracy is so severe that some shipping companies have already decided to take the longer and more expensive sea route around the Cape of Good Hope. And many stakeholders, who depend on regional sea trade, are suffering from the rise of Somali piracy.

Mr. President,

Pirate attacks also entail serious environmental risks, a threat that remains often unsaid but is increasingly likely, given the fact that within the targeted vessels there are

oil or chemical tankers, and that pirates are using even more powerful weaponry. A major environmental disaster in the Gulf of Aden could be triggered if a tanker is set on fire or even sunk, a probability which grows day by day.

If the International Community wants to stop piracy off the coast of Somalia, the following actions are needed:

1. The identification of the actual root causes of piracy. The international community must participate in addressing these root causes.
2. Creation of alternative sources of livelihood such as income generating projects for the fishermen and other coastal dwellers.
3. Rehabilitation of Somali Coastal Guards and other law-enforcement agencies.
4. Creation of Information-sharing networks among African coastal states on piracy activities and other sea-related crimes.
5. Preliminary security escort for mercantile vessels that ferries goods to and from the African coastal states for seafarers' safety.
6. The International Community should fully support the TFG to be able to deter pirates' activities by providing the resources required for the enhancement of marine and coastal security forces.
7. The International Community should help the TFG in its planned post-conflict environmental assessment to determine the impact of the toxic wastes dumped in the Somalia territorial waters.
8. Carry out assessment studies with the neighbouring states to determine the spill-over effects of the marine pollution caused by the foreign vessels from the industrialized and other countries.

Mr. President,

I thank you.